

Strawman Workplan for Taunton Bay Advisory Group

The goal of the Taunton Bay Comprehensive Resource Management Plan is to manage human uses of Taunton Bay in a manner that will

1. protect and sustain ecological functions and values, and
2. manage marine resources for the long-term use and enjoyment of all citizens of Maine.

The role of this group is to act as a central coordinator to build consensus views on the issues related to condition, vision and management of Taunton Bay.

- 1.) Find common ground among the various users and interests
- 2.) establish governance model and representation
- 3.) address issue of confidentiality
- 4.) clarify and establish clear goals and objectives
- 5.) organize and convene meetings that represent a broad range of interests,
- 6.) develop a revised workplan in consultation with others
- 7.) advise the State on findings and make recommendations for improved management
- 8.) oversee harvester assessments

Excerpted from the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan submitted by DMR to Legislature

Management of Taunton Bay currently exists under state laws and regulations. We are not beginning with a blank slate. The Advisory Group's most valuable role is to offer alternatives and/or refinements to the existing management regime. Rather than temporary patches (which are necessary at times), long term solutions are preferred. In only 9 months, for example, the dragging moratorium expires. In the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan, the DMR proposed one way to manage dragging in the bay within the constraints of protecting overall ecological health. The Advisory Group can play a direct role in refining and improving that proposal.

The following workplan may have few words but it is ambitious. Sustainability means long-term. This is a long term commitment. We believe it is better to complete a few projects well early on rather than attempting the many projects we all want. We think that it is important that the Advisory Group members feel a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction with a job well done. The frequency and pace of the workplan needs to be carefully considered and changed to suit the group.

To measure progress, we recommend that for each task, there is an understanding of what completion or success means. Some tasks may have performance criteria to measure ecological, economic, and social "health." Others tasks may not less suited to measureable criteria. Adaptive management means continual checking and changing based on changing needs and understanding. The plan can and should be open for revision at any time.

Workplan

Meeting 1 - August

- Introduce the members of Advisory Committee
- Explain goals and expectations of the Department and Legislature,
- Establish a governance framework that works for all members
- Identify issues important to members
- Clarify questions regarding roles, meetings, reports, definitions etc.

Meeting 2 - September

- Define a public communications policy that enables an accurate representation of group activities, viewpoints yet ensures transparency.
- Introduce and draft an annual workplan

Meeting 3 - November

- Meet with Commissioner Lapointe
- Draft a drag management plan developed based in consideration of impacts to other resources (rulemaking targeted for March 2008)

Meeting 3b – tentatively December depending on need for further discussion of above.

Meeting 4 - January

- Finalize drag management plan with draft regulation language.
- Receive background report from DMR on shellfish closures with discussion of feasible next steps.

Meeting 5 – March

- Submit language with supporting justification to the Commissioner on managing drag harvests within the bay.
- Placeholder for opening shellfish beds depending on previous meeting with potential for conducting sanitary surveys and water quality monitoring
- Begin discussion on the issue of improving responsible public access

Meeting 6 – May

- Identify management actions that can begin based on existing information. For example, protection of horseshoe crabs and their habitats.
- Identify long-range research and monitoring projects and develop a plan to conduct them.
 - Assessing extent of eelgrass cover and rate of change
 - establishes a water quality (may include sediments and tissues) monitoring program
 - Assesses threats and condition of food resources available to migratory shorebirds
 - Investigates early life stages of horseshoe crabs
 - Identifies applied research areas
 - Addresses an issue of interest to worm and/or clam industry

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Meeting 7 – June

- Begin discussion on how to collect accurate harvest data while considering confidentiality
- Explore interest in coordinating municipal shellfish programs and identify incentives and disincentives to do so.

Meeting 8 – August

- Annual Review - review past year and prepare a workplan for upcoming year.

Summary of Actions Associated to Achieve Plan Objectives (from the Comprehensive Resource Management Plan submitted by DMR to Legislature).

Objectives	Action
Management of Taunton Bay will reflect a diversity of interests and uses	Formation of Taunton Bay Advisory Group
Advisory Group will report on progress and recommendations	Advisory Group to meet twice annually with DMR Commissioner
Conditions to support healthy populations	Mudflat infauna. Stock assessments. Habitat mapping. Water quality assessments
Physical disturbance will be managed to protect eelgrass	Designated dragging areas. Habitat mapping
Physical disturbance will be managed to protect other rare and sensitive habitats	Designated dragging areas. Habitat mapping
Maintain the light penetration depth through the water column to protect historically mapped eelgrass beds	Volunteer water quality monitoring
Maintain stable or declining levels of toxic contaminants	Blue mussel contaminant assays
Prevent an increase in shellfish closures	DMR shellfish sanitation program
Sedimentation from human activities does not negatively affect other ecological or human uses	Volunteer water quality monitoring. Research
Attain State of Maine swimming standards	Not assessed
Horseshoe crab populations to remain stable or increase	Breeding survey. Designated dragging areas
Restore mussels, scallops and urchins populations	Stock assessment
Support sustainable commercial and recreational harvests	Mussel harvest reporting
Measurable impacts from aquaculture operations are confined to the lease site or vicinity of discharge.	MePDES permit. Mudflat infauna